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Economic History and Geography

The Kentucky Mountains. Transportation and Commerce, 1750-1911. A Study in the Economic History of a Coal Field. By MARY VERHOEFF. Filson Club Publications, No. 26. (Louisville: John P. Morton and Company. 1911. Pp. 208.)

The author has selected for study that part of Kentucky known as the Cumberland Plateau, or the mountainous region in the eastern part of the state. Its topography is such as to make it almost inaccessible, except by expensive transportation systems, as it is not only mountainous, but is broken by a perfect network of water-courses, ridges, and valleys extending in every direction. Fully fifty per cent of the surface is not adapted to cultivation, but in all of the thirty-four counties in the district coal is present, as well as other mineral resources. The population has received few additions from outside since the first settlement of the district, and is therefore very homogeneous and ethnically one of the purest in the United States. Their speech still savors of the sixteenth century. But this very isolation, combined with poverty, intemperance, bad housing, and poor food, has brought about a marked deterioration, and renders the typical mountaineer unfit for modern industrial labor. The salvation of this people lies in making the region accessible to civilizing influences. Economic forces are gradually effecting this, as the railroads are pushing in to the coal fields, but as yet only the counties on the margin of the district have been touched. The great problem of the Kentucky mountaineer has thus always been and still is the question of adequate means of transportation. This fact is clearly brought out by Miss Verhoeff's study.

Except for a concise introduction, in which the natural features and the population are described, the body of the monograph is devoted to an account of the mountain roads. But, after reading of the efforts of one hundred and fifty years, one lays down the book with a feeling of surprise that so little has been accomplished in that time. The original method of constructing roads, by means of a labor tax, adopted from Virginia in 1785, still persists with little modification. With the movement for internal improvements in 1835, Kentucky instituted a state board of internal improvements, and by 1850 it had expended \$206,000 on roads, which Miss Verhoeff thinks "considerable." In addition to this the state invested \$2,694,000 in turnpike companies. A few roads were

built by private enterprise, and the counties doubtless did something, but of this no account is given, the study being confined to state undertakings. The larger part of the volume is concerned with details of legislation about individual roads traced with painstaking care from 1750 to 1850; for the period 1850 to 1911 only twelve pages are allowed. Possibly this is reserved for the second volume.

Miss Verhoeff has done a very careful and creditable piece of work, but it betrays at more than one point the inexperience of an amateur. A few such points are the following: round numbers are better used for approximations (p. 4); 1811 should read 1911 (p. 35); it seems unlikely that a sinking fund was used to "carry on public works" (p. 51); a curious use is made of quotation marks (p. 95 and elsewhere); "to" should read "with" (p. 98). There is no index; no chapter headings are given in the table of contents, though they occur in the text; the chapters are of very unequal length, ranging from 12 to 74 pages. From an antiquarian standpoint the book is admirable; but it lacks the firm grasp of a trained economist or historian. So much is promised in the title and subtitle, that the failure to live up to that promise is the more noticeable; although, as a second volume is evidently contemplated, possibly other economic phases of the transportation question may there be given. As a pioneer and careful piece of work in an unworked and difficult field, however, the study deserves commendation, and it is to be hoped that Miss Verhoeff will continue her researches. As a specimen of the printer's art the volume is highly creditable to the Filson Club, of whose publications it forms one of the best numbers.

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Alexander Hamilton. By WILLIAM S. CULBERTSON. John A. Porter Prize Essay, 1910. (New Haven: Yale University Press. 1911. Pp. xiii, 153. \$1.00.)

Nationalism is the key-note of this essay which seeks to show how every measure of the man tended to construct a nation. This is a truism, but the treatment of the subject has led the author into a new and somewhat neglected field of investigation—the Hamilton manuscripts. So intent were the editors of Hamilton's writings to lay stress on political features of his career that the